

Welcomes Administration's Announcement of Additional Border Security Resources, but Believes Arizona Needs More

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell today introduced, along with Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA), the bi-partisan Stop the Drop Houses Act, H.R. 5769, a bill to help authorities fight the drop house epidemic here in the Valley, which are frequently used by Mexican cartels as way stations for their illegal smuggling operations.

The Stop the Drop Houses Act would close a federal loophole and allow authorities to use civil forfeiture to seize homes used as drop houses. Under current law, civil forfeiture can be used to seize other property used to facilitate smuggling crimes, such as vehicles or even airplanes. However, civil forfeiture cannot be used against the actual homes used as drop houses.

"Smugglers and Mexican drug cartels have set up drop houses across the Valley, which are magnets for crime and violence," said Mitchell. "This bill will give an important additional tool to authorities to shut down these drop houses."

The Phoenix metropolitan area is believed to have as many as 1,000 drop houses, many of which are home to human smuggling operations. [Source: Associated Press, Jan. 16, 2008; [USA Today](#), Jan. 15, 2008] Crime associated with the drop houses is significant. Phoenix witnesses approximately 300 kidnappings a year. [Source: http://www.justice.gov/usao/az/press_releases/2010/Harris.pdf]
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Mitchell also commented on today's announcement that the Obama Administration is going to

deploy additional Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, Border Patrol Agents and other personnel. "While I appreciate the additional resources, I believe it going to take much more. The federal government has a responsibility to secure the border and fix our broken immigration system, and while this is a step in the right direction, the federal government needs to do more. Arizona continues to pay an unfair price for the federal government's failure to secure the border and fix our broken immigration system. More than half of all illegal crossings over the U.S.-Mexico border happen in Arizona."

Mitchell has previously called on both Presidents Bush and Obama to place additional guardsmen and resources to secure border. [Sources: [Mitchell Release](#), August 9, 2007; [Mitchell Release](#), May 7, 2008; [Letter to President Obama](#), March 25, 2009; [Mitchell Release](#), July 6, 2009; [Letter to the President Obama](#), March 30, 2010] Additionally, earlier this year, Mitchell introduced the Deploy National Guard Troops to the Border Act, bipartisan legislation to deploy a minimum of 3,000 additional National Guard troops to the border. [Source: [Mitchell Release](#), May 21, 2010].

Yesterday, Mitchell, along with local law enforcement officials, visited a drop house and the site of a drug cartel kidnapping. Mitchell's bill would allow homes where the homeowners knew or should have known that their home was facilitating illegal smuggling to be seized using civil forfeiture. [Source: [KPNX](#), July 18, 2010]

In February 2008, Mitchell launched an investigation into ICE's efforts to identify and remove criminal aliens and combat with drop houses. [Source: [Mitchell Release](#), April 26, 2010] The results of the two and a half year Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation will be released on Thursday July 22, 2010, at a House Committee on Homeland Security hearing.

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Mitchell Introduces Bill to Help Stop Valley Drop Houses, Drug Cartel Epidemic

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